

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 051058Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 691
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5241

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, IN, PK
SUBJECT: APPEALS FOR BHUTTO

REF: A. NEW DELHI 4377; B. ISLAMABAD 3283

1. WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY CALL BY MRS. GANDHI IN NEW DELHI FOR COMMUTATION OF BHUTTO'S SENTENCE. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, HER FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE MATTER CAME ONLY YESTERDAY, APRIL 4, WHEN, IN AN ADDRESS TO CONGRESS-I WORKERS IN JAMMU, SHE WONDERED WHY THE JANATA GOVERNMENT KEPT SILENT WHEN BHUTTO WAS CONDEMNED TO DEATH EVEN THROUGH THE PEOPLE OF KASHMIR AND ARAB AND OTHER COUNTRIES HAD PROTESTED THE SENTENCE. NOTING THAT BHUTTO WAS NO FRIEND OF HERS, MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT HE WAS NEVERTHELESS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS; IN ANY EVENT, SHE HAD ALWAYS OPPOSED THE DEATH PENALTY ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS. SHE ADDED THAT WHILE SHE DID NOT KNOW HOW FAIR BHUTTO'S TRIAL HAD BEEN, EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT MILITARY GOVERNMENTS HAVE LITTLE RESPECT FOR
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DEMOCRATIC NORMS. COMMENT: AS ADDRESSEES WILL REMEMBER, JAMMU WAS THE SCENE OF PRO-BUTTO DEMONSTRATIONS ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO (REF A). IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT MRS. GANDHI IS RAISING THE BHUTTO CASE FOR HER OWN POLITICAL PURPOSES MORE THAN OUT OF ANY PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR BHUTTO'S FATE. END COMMENT.

2. WE ARE ALSO UNAWARE OF ANY APPEAL BY SHEIKH ABDULLAH FOR MERCY FOR BHUTTO. THE PRESS REPORTS EMBASSY ISLAMABAD SAW PROBABLY REFER TO THE SHEIKH'S MARCH 22 PROMISE TO THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR ASSEMBLY THAT HE WOULD CONVEY TO PM DESAI THE SENTIMENTS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE REGARDING THE LAHORE HIGH COURT'S VERDICT. AT THE TIME, THE SHEIKH DELCLINEDTO COMMENT ON THE VERDICT, NOTING ONLY THAT EVENTS IN PAKISTAN HAD VINDICATED JAMMU AND KASHMIR'S DECISION IN 1974 (SIC) TO CAST ITS LOT WITH INDIA.

3. A FEW PROMINENT INDIANS HAVE CALLED FOR CLEMENCY FOR BHUTTO. TWO WHO COME READILY TO MIND ARE PILOO MODY, BHUTTO'S LONG-TIME FRIEND AND BIOGRAPHER, AND KHUSHWANT SINGH, EDITOR OF THE "ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY" AND INDIA'S SOLE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED JINNAH CENTENARY CELEBRATION.
GOHEEN

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